

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5156

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION USNATO

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SU, FR

SUBJECT: NEW SIGNS OF STRAIN IN FRENCH-SOVIET RELATIONS

REF: PARIS 30698

1. SUMMARY. PUBLICATION OF REPORTS THAT THE POMPIDOU-BREZHNEV SUMMIT HAS BEEN POSTPONED SERVES TO UNDERLINE AGAIN THE GROWING TENSION IN FRENCH-SOVIET RELATIONS. ALTHOUGH BOTH THE QUAI AND THE SOVIET EMBASSY HAVE DENIED THE PRESS STORIES, SOVIET EMBASSY SOURCES TELL US THAT THE LONG-HERALDED VISIT WILL NOT IN FACT TAKE PLACE IN JANUARY. MEANWHILE, AN OPEN LETTER FROM PCF SECRETARY GENERAL MARCHAIS TO POMPIDOU ATTACKING THE GOVERNMENT FOR ITS EC-NINE POLICY CLEARLY SEEMS TO REFLECT SOVIET ANXIETIES, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF MARCHAIS' RECENT VISIT WITH BREZHNEV AND THE LITERATURNAYA GAZETA CRITIQUE PUBLISHED IN MOSCOW ON WEDNESDAY. BENEATH THESE SURFACE INDICATIONS OF DISCORD LIES SOVIET APPREHENSION THAT THE FRENCH ARE NOW BENT ON TRANSFORMING THE EC-NINE INTO A POLITICAL AND MILITARY

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ORGANIZATION, WHILE THE FRENCH FEAR THAT THE SOVIETS ARE EXPLOITING DETENTE TO ENCOURAGE THE NEUTRALIZATION OF EUROPE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN NOV. 30 ISSUE, FRENCH DAILY LE MONDE REPORTED THAT "INFORMED SOVIET CIRCLES WHO HAD ASSURED SEVERAL WEEKS AGO" THAT THE POMPIDOU-BREZHNEV VISIT "WOULD TAKE PLACE DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF JANUARY ARE SAYING TODAY THAT IT WILL NOT OCCUR THAT MONTH." BOTH THE QUAI AND THE SOVIET EMBASSY QUICKLY DENIED PUBLICLY THAT SUCH WAS THE CASE. HOWEVER, IN CONVERSATIONS WITH EMBASSY OFFICERS, SOVIET FIRST SECRETARY SUCHKOV NO. 27. EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT VISIT WOULD COME IN JANUARY AND ON NOV. 29, PRESS ATTACHE VIKTOROV SAID WITHOUT QUALIFICATION THAT JANUARY HAD BEEN RULED OUT. IN TALK WITH CHARGE ON JANUARY 30, SOVIET CHARGE KIZICHENKO CLAIMED EXACT DATE HAD NEVER BEEN DISCUSSED AND THAT VISIT WOULD TAKE PLACE "AT BEGINNING OF 1974," AS STATED IN LAST COMMUNIQUE OF POMPIDOU-BREZHNEV MEETING IN JUNE, 1973.

3. MEANWHILE, ON NOV. 11, MARCHAIS' OPEN LETTER TO POMPIDOU EXPANDED ON L'HUMANITE'S EARLIER CRITICISM OF BULGARIAN FOREIGN MINISTER MLADENOV (SEPTEL) FOR NOT HEEDING THE DANGERS OF FRENCH POLICY IN THE EC-NINE. MARCHAIS ACCUSED POMPIDOU OF "MOVING TOWARD THE CREATION OF A NEW POLITICAL BLOC OF CAPITALIST STATES IN EUROPE, OR MORE EXACTLY, OF ASUB-BLOC DEPENDENT ON THE ATLANTIC BLOC." MARCHAIS DENOUNCED WHAT HE TERMED A FRENCH "CRUSADE" TO GIVE THE EC A "MILITARY DIMENSION". AFTER ATTACKING JOBERT FOR ADVOCATING IN HIS NOV. 21 WEU SPEECH THE "ESTABLISHMENT OF A COMMON EUROPEAN DEFENSE," HE WENT ON TO CRITICIZE THE GOF FOR SUGGESTING A BRITISH-FRENCH NUCLEAR FORCE, MOVING TOWARD CLOSER COOPERATION WITH NATO, CHARACTERIZING US-SOVIET TIES AS A "CONDONIUM" AND FOR OPPOSING THE AGREEMENT ON PREVENTION OF NUCLEAR WAR.

4. IN HIS CONVERSATION WITH CHARGE, KIZICHENKO CLAIMED THAT APPEARANCE OF THIS LETTER ONLY A WEEK AFTER MARCHAIS' MEETING WITH BREZHNEV WAS NO MORE THAN A COINCIDENCE. HOWEVER, HE ADDED THAT "PCF WAS BECOMING MORE ACTIVE IN OPPOSING THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT BOTH INTERNALLY AND IN FOREIGN POLICY." WHEN CHARGE ASKED HIM WHETHER SOVIETS AGREED WITH CONTENTS OF LETTER, KIZICHENKO HESITATED, NOTED SOVIET COMECON APPROACHES TO THE EC, CONFIDENTIAL
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AND SAID SOVIETS WERE CONCERNED LEST EC BECOME CLOSED GROUPING WHICH WOULD INHIBIT EAST-WEST TRADE. ON NOV. 27, SUCHKOV WAS MORE OUTSPOKEN, EXPRESSING CONSIDERABLE APPREHENSION OVER FRENCH-EC POLICY AND CALLING EMBOFF'S ATTENTION TO MARCHAIS LETTER AS CONTAINING THE REASONS FOR HIS DISQUIET. IN CONVERSATION WITH POLCOUNS NOV. 30, ROMANIAN MINISTER COUNSELLOR GHIBERNEA CAME RIGHT OUT AND SAID THE MARCHAIS LETTER SHOULD BE INTERPRETED AS A SOVIET WARNING TO THE FRENCH.

5. THIS IS A FRENCH FEELING AS WELL. QUAI EUROPEAN

DIRECTOR DE MARGERIE TOLD POLCOUNS THAT MARCHAIS LETTER REPRESENTED STRONG SOVIET WARNING TO GOF, AND THUS JOBERT'S WEU SPEECH WAS A "COURAGEOUS POSTURE". ALSO IN CONVERSATION WITH POLCOUNS ON NOVEMBER 27, ELYSEE PRESS SPOKESMAN ROUGAGNOU DREW ATTENTION TO MARCHAIS' LETTER. HE SAID THE ELYSEE HAD BEEN STRUCK BY DEMONSTRATION OF EXTREME SOVIET NERVOUSNESS OVER EVOLVING EC-9 UNITY AND MARCHAIS' CONTINUING ROLE AS INDIRECT SPOKESMAN FOR MOSCOW. ROUGAGNOU SAID IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS HE HAD RECEIVED SEVERAL VISITS FROM SOVIET DIPLOMATS, PARTICULARLY AS EC POLITICAL COOPERATION HAS INTENSIFIED. THEY WERE WORRIED ABOUT THE DECEMBER EC SUMMIT AND SEEMED ESPECIALLY CONCERNED THAT A SEPARATE EUROPEAN ENTITY, NO LONGER UNDER THE CONTROL OF THE US, WOULD MEAN THE SOVIET UNION WOULD BE FACED WITH TWO POWERFUL ADVERSARIES, THE US AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY. THIS WOULD ADD A CERTAIN UNPREDICTABILITY TO SOVIET CALCULATIONS ABOUT WESTERN INTENTIONS. IN A SENSE, ROUGAGNOU SPECULATED, THE OLD COLD WAR YEARS WERE MORE SATISFACTORY FROM MOSCOW'S VIEWPOINT, BECAUSE IT COULD COUNT ON THE US KEEPING ITS EUROPEAN ALLIES IN LINE.

6 THE IMPACT OF ALL THIS HAS BEEN HEIGHTENED BY THE LITERATURNAYA GAZETA ARTICLE OF NOV. 28 IN MOSCOW, WHICH HAS RECEIVED WIDE COVERAGE IN THE FRENCH MEDIA. EVEN L'HUMANITE, WHICH IS USUALLY CAREFUL NOT TO CAST ASPERSIONS ON SOVIET-FRENCH DETENTE, DESPITE ITS CRITICISM OF THE PRESENT FRENCH GOVERNMENT CLAIMED THAT THE AUTHOR OF THE ARTICLE SHOWED DISPLEASURE "OVER THE POLICY OF MR. POMPIDOU WHO IS A FERVENT PARTISAN OF ACCELERATED EUROPEAN INTEGRATION ON THE POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEVEL". WHEN
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QUESTIONED ON THE ARTICLE, KIZICHENKO TOOK PAINS TO POINT OUT THAT LITERATURNAYA GAZETA WAS ACTUALLY A "MINOR NEWSPAPER WITH POPULAR ARTICLES" AND CLAIMED THAT THE ARTICLE SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN TOO SERIOUSLY.

7. FRENCH NEWSPAPERS, INCLUDING L'HUMANITE, HAVE ALSO SINGLED OUT PRAVDA ARTICLE OF NOVEMBER 29 ON THE BRANDT-POMPIDOU MEETING, WHICH REPORTEDLY CHARGED THAT THE QUESTION OF EUROPEAN DEFENSE RAISED DURING THE TALKS WAS A "FALSE PROBLEM WHICH IS OUT OF TUNE", IN VIEW OF JOINT EFFORTS TOWARD COLLECTIVE SECURITY AND MUTUAL COOPERATION. AS IF IN REPLY, LE MONDE, ON NOV. 30, RAN AN ARTICLE BY JACQUES ISNARD WHICH STRESSED THE SOVIET NUMERICAL AND QU

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